

OFF-ROAD VEHICLE (ORV) TRAILS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

**Holiday-Inn Lansing West
7501 West Saginaw Highway
Lansing, Michigan
November 7, 2007**

Chairman Ranney called the meeting of the Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Trails Advisory Board to order at 6:32 p.m. on Wednesday, November 7, 2007, in Lansing, Michigan.

Members Present:

Dick Ranney, Chair
Glenn Moll, Vice-Chair
John Bernard
Larry Harrington
Under Sheriff Darrel Sadler for Sheriff Strait

Members Absent:

Peter Wyckoff
Jason Dinsmore

Department of Natural Resources (Department) Staff Present:

James Radabaugh, Forest, Mineral and Fire Management (FMFM), Lansing
Steve DeBrabander, FMFM, Lansing
Steve Kubisiak, FMFM, Lansing
Richard Kennedy, FMFM, Lansing
Maureen Houghton, Grants Management, Lansing
Sergeant Al Bavarskas, Law Enforcement Division, Lansing

USDA Forest Service Staff Present:

Carol Boll, Huron-Manistee National Forest, Cadillac

Chairman Ranney welcomed everyone. The Board, Department staff, and the audience introduced themselves.

MINUTES

Acknowledge minutes of the May 9, 2007, and August 8, 2007, ORV Trails Advisory Board Meetings.

Mr. Moll made a motion, supported by Mr. Harrington, to accept the minutes of the May 9, 2007, Off-Road Vehicle Trails Advisory Board Meeting. Motion carried.

Mr. Harrington made a motion, supported by Mr. Bernard to accept the minutes of the August 8, 2007, Off-Road Vehicle Trails Advisory Board Meeting. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Trail Expansion Prioritization Update – R.J. Witte, Cycle Conservation Club of Michigan

reported the Michigan Motorized Recreation Council met in September in Cadillac to prioritize areas for trail expansion. Trails were prioritized by groups. Group #1 -- Alcona County, Denton, St Helen, Gogebic County, Atlanta, Alpena County, Crapo Creek, Clare County. Group #2 -- Missaukee Junction, Connect Foreman Lake Trail to Birch Hills Trail, Mio / Hunt Creek. Group #3 -- Benzie County, Two-Hearted, Newaygo County, White Cloud, Fredrick, Leota and Iosco County. The goal is to provide trail proposals to the trail analysts by December 1.

Mr. Kubisiak reported 94 miles of new designated ORV route has been approved by the Department. Bergland to Sidnaw Route, located in Houghton and Ontonagon County; the Freda Grade and Bill Nicholl's North, located in Houghton County; additions to Black Lake Route and Black Lake Trail, located in Cheboygan and Presque Isle counties and the Indian River ORV Route, located in Cheboygan County.

Chairman Ranney thanked Mr. Witte and Mr. Kubisiak.

Motorcycle Trail Directors Order Update – **Steve DeBrabander** reported the Department received a petition from the UP Sandstormers Motorcycle and ORV Club requesting a Directors Order to protect designated motorcycle trails from being widened by ATV use. Field staff completed an evaluation of the designated motorcycle trail system and made recommendations regarding which trails should remain designated for motorcycle use and be protected by Directors Order to prevent the potential of widening by ATV use. The primary criteria staff used in the evaluation were trail width and existing use. Designated motorcycle trails that have already been widen by ATVs will be recommended to be reclassified for that use. Designated motorcycle trails that still retain narrow single track characteristics suitable only for motorcycle use will be recommended to remain designated for motorcycle use and protected by Directors Order to clarify enforcement.

Mr. DeBrabander emphasized it is important for everyone to understand this action will not result in a loss of riding opportunities for ATV or motorcycle riders. Trails program staff is currently evaluating field recommendations from a statewide perspective and will bring recommendations back to the board at a future meeting.

Long Range Financial Plan Workgroup Update – **Steve DeBrabander** reported workgroup members have been appointed as recommended by the board. The process has been delayed due to the state budget. The charge of the Long Range Financial Plan Workgroup is to develop a financial plan for the long-term management and operation of the ORV Program. Members include Dick Ranney, Glenn Moll, representing the ORV Board, Lewis Shuler, representing motorcycle groups, Sue Thrushman, representing ATV groups, Paul Hittie, representing truck groups, and Kelly Johnston, representing Michigan Motorcycle Dealers. Members from the Department are: Steve Kubisiak, Steve DeBrabander, Jim Radabaugh, Joe Tayler, Creig Grey, and Jim Wood. The first meeting is anticipated to occur in December. The workgroup is expected to accomplish their task in four work sessions in a combination of face-to-face meetings and conference calls.

NEW BUSINESS

Trail Berm Removal Proposal – **Mr. Witte** presented a power-point proposal to remove earth berms from ORV trails that are formed on curves by ATVs. He said the project has the support of the Lower Peninsula trail analysts. A one year pilot project is proposed. He acknowledged that not all berms need to be removed. A grant request in the amount of \$44,374.00 was requested by the Cycle Conservation Club of Michigan (CCC). The project would be overseen by the trail analysts who would write policies and expectations required to complete the project. Findings would be reported back to the Advisory Board upon completion of the project.

Mr. Moll commented the equipment operator would need to be an enthusiast and that would make a difference. He asked if the cost could be reduced.

Mr. Bernard expressed concern with cost and noted berms can be found throughout the entire system and questioned if this is the right thing to do.

Mr. Ranney commented on how snowmobile trails are graded with road grading equipment and front blades on snowmobile grooming tractors. He believes areas where water is problem should be a priority. He expressed concern with the experience of the equipment operator, questioned what type of equipment is needed, and suggested if the project is pursued that it should be competitively bid.

Mr. DeBrabander said he would like to hear what the trail riders have to say.

ORV Maps – **Steve Kubisiak** reported the ORV trails have been GPS'd. New trail maps are expected to be posted on the Department website in the Spring of 2008. The new maps will be available in PDF format with layered features. He encouraged enthusiasts to review the maps once they are on line and email him if they see any errors so they can be corrected and are the best product available. The goal is to continually improve the maps, and trail enthusiasts can play an important roll in that process. New snowmobile maps will be posted on the website by December 1.

2008 ORV Grant Recommendations -- **Mr. Kubisiak** reviewed 2008 appropriations, grant evaluation process, and recommendations for maintenance and restoration projects. The Department received 26 maintenance applications requesting approximately \$1.9 million and 8 restoration applications requesting approximately \$400,000. He noted there is an un-obligated balance of approximately \$259,500 in the maintenance category and \$73,000 in the restoration category. The Department will continue to identify projects to obligate the balances.

Maureen Houghton announced the ORV law enforcement grants have been approved by the Director and agreements will be mailed out to the counties shortly.

Mr. Moll made a motion, supported by Mr. Harrington, to accept staff recommendations for ORV trail maintenance and restoration grants. Motion carried.

STAFF REPORTS

USDA Forest Service – **Carol Boll, Huron-Manistee National Forest** announced the Ottawa National Forest and the Hiawatha National Forest have published Motor Vehicle Use Maps. They are available on-line and at Forest Service offices. Motor Vehicle Use Maps for the Huron side of the Huron-Manistee National Forest will be available in the spring of 2008 and Manistee side will be available in the spring of 2009.

Forest, Mineral and Fire Management – **Steve DeBrabander** provided an overview of the forest certification process and reported the corrective action response (CAR) concerning illegal ORV damage was cleared at the annual audit last week. A taskforce including Glenn Moll and Pete Wycoff from the ORV Advisory Board developed a strategy to address illegal ORV damage. A subsequent action plan was developed and approved by the FMFM management team. The action plan will be incorporated into the ORV management plan and a new CAR has been developed by the auditors to monitor follow through with the strategy.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE

Bill Gilbert, MI ATV Safety Association asked questions about several grant recommendations that were answered by staff. He is concerned that some motorcycle trails are wide enough for ATVs and if a Directors Order is issued ATV's will be prohibited. He asked about status of ORV safety instructor program. Sergeant Bavarskas will follow-up and get back with him.

Melissa Johnson, Muskegon expressed concern with trail expansion and changing of trail status from full-size vehicles to ATV trails on national forest land. She said trails that she used to drive her

truck on have been closed on the national forest. Carol Boll will put Melissa on a forest service mailing list.

Ronald Price, Cadillac Jeeps Off-Road Club asked if the berm removal project is implemented if it will be done on an ongoing basis. He asked who represents the truck community on the long range financial plan subcommittee. He said forest roads as defined by law do not provide the challenge his truck group is looking for. Staff and board members addressed his questions.

Amy Spray, Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) said Jason Dinsmore is no longer with MUCC and is attending law school. She is MUCC's new Resource Policy Specialist and will be taking Jason's place on the ORV Trails Advisory Board. She previously worked for Private Sector Consultants and worked on a Natural Resources Stewardship Program project dealing with ethical use of ORVs. She looks forward to serving on the board.

Pat Brower, GLFWDA said he is excited about the new maps and asked if the routes would have a different symbol. Routes will be illustrated as dashed lines.

Paul Mulder, GLFWDA said he is very disappointed at how the meeting is run and the lack of opportunity for public input during the course of the meeting. He described various types of road grading equipment and how they are used to grade snowmobile trails. He believes a Sweco trail dozer would work to remove berms. He does not believe the Department can do a Directors Order to restrict use on designated motorcycle trails based on his interpretation of the definition of forest trail in the law.

Thomas Dunn, AMA District 14 said timber is a 13 billion dollar industry in Michigan and believes forest certification is necessary to provide sustainable forests for future generations.

Meeting adjourned 8:47 p.m.

Next Meeting:

February 6, 2008 Lansing Holiday Inn-West

The tentative 2008 meeting schedule is February 6, May 7, August 6, November 5.

Public Present

Lewis Shuler, CCC
Bob Devoes, Great Lakes 4Wheel Drive
Assoc. (GLFWDA)
R.J. Witte, CCC
Bill Gilbert, MI ATV Safety Association
Ronald Price, Cadillac Jeeps Off Road Club
Pat Brower, GLFWDA
Melissa Preston, ATV Off-Road Club of MI
Brian Yinger, ATV Instructor
Thomas Dunn, AMA D-14
Amy Spray, MI United Conservation Clubs
Mark Orlando, Jackpine 4Wheel Drive Club
Kevin Drnad, ATV Off-Road
John F. Lang, Tri-Co Chapter CCC
Paul Mulder, GLFWDA